



# Alexandria Times

*Established in 1797 as The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Multimodal transportation in 20<sup>th</sup> century Alexandria

*Alexandria Times, September 22, 2016*

*Image, Alexandria County Power House and Car Barn at Four Mile Run. Photo, Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Va., Past and Present, by Alex J. Wedderburn, Courtesy, Office of Historic Alexandria.*

For many years, Alexandria has been a choice location for commuters to Washington, D.C., with a variety of transportation options available with which to traverse the capital region.

But current residents who are used to the convenience of Metro, Virginia Railway Express and the Capital Beltway may be surprised to learn that at the turn of the 20th century, the city was well on its way to garnering national attention for the variety of travel options available, both by land and water.

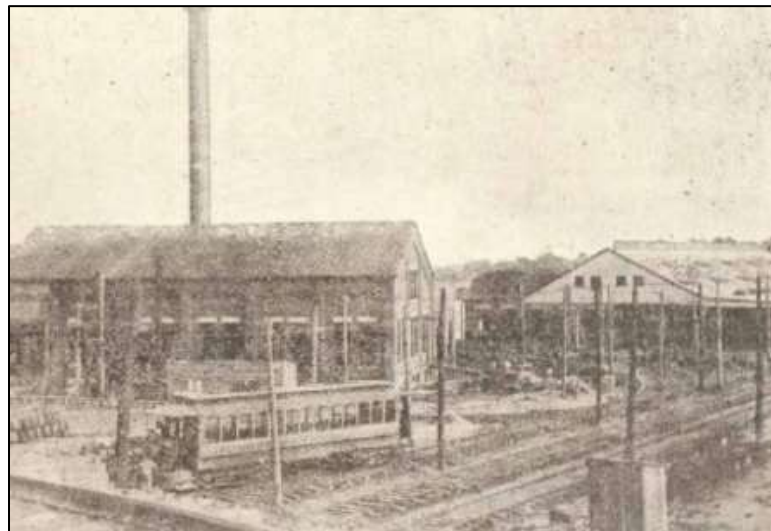
At the time, Alexandria boasted that it had the finest transportation services in Virginia, with the city connected to virtually all great American cities by major rail lines such as the Pennsylvania, Baltimore and Ohio and the Southern, with three main branches leading from the city: the main line, Manassas and Bluemont divisions.

Additional interstate passenger and freight service was conducted by the Chesapeake & Ohio, the Norfolk & Western, the Atlantic Coast Line, the Seaboard Air Line and the Washington-Southern line, which had just built the handsome Alexandria Union Station at the head of King Street at a cost of nearly \$100,000.

In 1906, records indicated that 743,734 passengers were shuttled between D.C. and Alexandria, with 92 trains running back and forth between the two cities each day.

Locally, the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Electric Railroad, seen in this 1907 view at The Alexandria County Power House and Car Barn at Four Mile Run, connected the nation's capital with downtown Alexandria and George Washington's home at Mount Vernon with scenic travel through the heart of the historic city and the wooded forests of Fairfax County.

The George Washington Memorial Parkway was largely built along the trolley's right of way in the early 1930s, and the rail tracks still are buried under the asphalt of North Columbus, King and South Royal streets. Daily ferry service also connected Alexandria with Washington and Mount Vernon, and a





## Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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line of steamers traveled each day to Norfolk to meet connections throughout the country and the world. Service to Baltimore twice a day was also another option available to Alexandrians.

With such comprehensive transit service and automobile development in its infancy, traffic on local roadways was virtually non-existent. Despite its 100-foot width, Washington Street was still only one lane in each direction with free, diagonal parking allowed throughout the downtown. Cars competed with horse-drawn wagons and a single stoplight on King Street controlled traffic.

Before the George Washington Memorial Parkway was built, those traveling to Washington proceeded up what is now Powhatan Street to reach the old Native American trail, redeveloped in 1809 as the Alexandria-Washington Turnpike and now known as U.S. Route 1.

*"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*